CHAPTER 7

Media Democracy in Action


By Project Censored Interns: Sandy Brown, Joni Wallent, Kristine Snyder, Luke Judd, Christopher Cox, Jacob Rich, Lori Rouse, Mark Thompson, Sean Arlt, Brittny Roeland, and Britt Walters

Activism and Optimism: The National Conference for Media Reform 2005 St Louis

BY SANDY BROWN

On a beautiful May afternoon, four Project Censored intern-activists took flight en route to St. Louis, Missouri, with two others following close behind. We were some of the several thousands of concerned citizens converging on The Gateway to the West to participate in the National Conference for Media Reform May 13-15, 2005. We were filled with a sense of excitement, anticipating the four days of exploration, discourse and activism. All six of us had been working with Project Censored for some time, some of us two years or more, and hungered for the opportunity to place names with faces, to shake the hands of those journalists, educators and activists who had so profoundly affected the course of our educations. Bob McChesney, Amy Goodman, George Lakoff, and Bill Moyers are
heroes to some of us and an inspiration to all. The four days that followed blurred together into a collage of catch phrases and mental snap shots. Each night we would return to our rooms and marvel over the powerful messages we had consumed and struggle with how we might share this enthusiasm and momentum with those who could not be with us. Our subjective experiences at the end of this marvelous journey were married on the plane trip and car ride home. We are inspired to carry this message of hope and change into our lives, our school, our communities. Some of us will write, some produce documentaries, and some will sing poetry. We have all returned to work, to stand on the front lines of this movement that has the potential to rescue our failing democracy.

Directly Gathering Solutions and Momentum for Action: Spoken Words
BY JONI WALLENT—Student/Intern/Activist

To: St. Louis, Missouri, for the 2nd National Conference for Media Reform.

And what’s going to happen next for the average person who doesn’t accept what the media decides the news will be, controlling what eyeballs see? I am in looking out the airplane window, gathering momentum representing one organization, one student, one concerned and energetic individual. The following is a selection of the jewels I gathered through mind-bending, plug-yourself-in conversations taken home in the notes furiously scribbled on the open pages of my yellow three ring binder. Armed with pen in hand I listened as discussions twisted and challenged the collective minds of attendees around solutions.

“All we have to do is organize and we will win.”—Robert McChesney.

The National Conference for Media Reform served as a strengthening of network and support for the freedom-of-information effort—reminding us we have the choice, if we don’t
like what’s given, to turn off that which we don’t like, and take the next step: ACTION. The conference lecture rooms and corridors resonated in a three-day solution-oriented vibe that noted our unique powers of direct action. Empowering panel discussions encouraged the direct calling of legislative and corporate representatives—as our voices need to be heard—the need to write letters to magazine and newspaper editors, addressing concerns inside envelopes, and to take to the information highways and the streets, as both blogger and protestor communicate and meet. Our media is political. It is a public space we use to discuss all other issues, serving a politically universal audience. At the National Conference our gathering of momentum was for productive media reform—not to criticize the corporate-control of private interest exercised over our media, but rather to focus on solutions that reclaim it. Attendees came together to support, network, and take positive steps forward in this discussion of our media.

To make change, to reclaim, Mark Cooper reminds us, “We need bottom-up heat—as consumers realize they are also producers, and each listener is also a speaker.” Salim Muwakkil adds, “Whoever controls the media controls our destiny,” encouraging the need for participation from all.

So what are the weaknesses of the left, what are the strengths of the right, and aren’t the issues of free of speech and open media concerns that unite? Let’s become our own media makers, creating info structures and networks of distribution. Be involved—respond and contribute—facing challenges not as red or blue, but collective purple states. And for the average people who don’t accept the pre-spun lies news anchors read, let’s be the traveling packs of journalists pulling out notepads from back pockets, because if each person acts like a tower with a signal we can reclaim the vacuums of our media as this conference reaffirmed the Call for solution-oriented Action.

**Frequencies of Change**

**BY LUKE JUDD—Project Censored Intern/Activist/Film Maker**
Over two thousand people gathered inside the Millennium Hotel in St. Louis for the 2005 National Media Reform Conference on May 13th, 14th, and 15th. Assumably, the site was selected for geographic centrality. But being in the shadow of the arch and across the bridge from East St. Louis (AKA Monsanto town), held much greater symbolism than intended.

The Gateway arch, which is commonly referred to as the ‘gateway to the west’, reminds visitors by its design that everything that goes up must come down, and that all lines on a globe are round. And that was really the theme of the conference, that of hope. The whole weekend was filled with inspiring and empowering speeches. For me, one of the most powerful quotes came from author Norman Solomon during a Friday session entitled “News, Information and Corporate Media.” After eloquent speeches by author Naomi Klein and journalist Juan Gonzalez, Solomon urged the over-capacity audience to, “Save pessimism for better times.”

Solomon’s attitude seemed to permeate the conference and the weekend. There was not the Bush-bashing that one might expect to hear, but rather people networking, brainstorming and sharing solution-based ideas. The motto of the conference was “Gathering Momentum.” That is exactly what one glorious weekend in St. Louis accomplished. Now we have to keep the momentum.

Though the media reform movement is up against the most powerful propaganda machine this planet has ever seen, it helps to remember that no government or border has withstood the eternal test of time. And as much as some of us may feel the course of this nation is a runaway train, the tracks are just smoke and mirrors. It’s our job now, in the Media Reform Movement, to spoil the trick for those who still believe in magic.

I See a Future and It Is Bright
BY SANDY BROWN—Student/Intern/Activist/Documentary Film Maker
As the plane ascended and the customary hush fell over our fellow travelers, I found myself utterly energized, no doubt alienating all those around me with my incessant chatter. “Do you think we will get to interview Amy Goodman ... I heard Phil Donahue was speaking ... I wonder if there will be a lot of other students attending ... Do you think we can find some good Blues ... I’ve heard great things about the soul food in St. Louis.” My voice was faltering as the plane touched down and my compatriots and I stepped out into the sultry evening air. Peter Phillips, Director of Project Censored, our professor and mentor, smiled and directed us to our van. A short while later, weary from the trip, we arrived at our accommodations ... The luxury suites, i.e. those with running hot water, at the Budget Inn, nestled most intimately next to Dirt Cheap Cigarettes and Dirt Cheap Gas and Beer. The ambiance was all I had come to expect as a student intern and I dropped gratefully onto my perfectly broken-in mattress. None of us slept very well. My roommate Joni and I giggled and chatted well into the early morning, much too excited to sleep. It was all I could do to stay in bed. I was going to be interviewing people who had been making change, real change in the world and I was a part of that. I felt I was the luckiest girl in the world.

FRIDAY MAY 13, 2005: Seven o’clock arrived much earlier than usual and Joni and I were thankful for the abundant supply of reasonably hot water. Bleary-eyed and a little shaky, we all filed into the van after a brief ‘shot gun’ battle for the coveted front seat. St. Louis sparkled in the early morning light and our eyes searched the horizon for the landmark we all knew was just beyond our sight. My heart skipped when I first glimpsed The Arch. It seemed unreasonable, much, much too big and to me and a little unwieldy, maybe even oddly representative of The Mass Media Monster I had imagined we had journeyed to engage in battle. I committed myself to an adventure in the belly of the beast later that day.

The Millennium Hotel, home to the conference and many attendees was situated Downtown directly across from The Arch. As we entered the convention area my eyes darted about seeking out
that familiar face. I knew they were there, or would be shortly, and I waited with bated breath for our first encounter. What followed were three full days of back to back interviews, rushed meals and abbreviated phone calls. The environment was charged with kinetic energy and it was contagious. No sooner had we finished with one mind-blowing encounter, than Joni, my producer and public relations Diva, would lead me to the next. My mind reels in reflection on the conversations witnessed by me and my camera.

George Lakoff, in his endearing and enthusiastic manner reminded me to never forget the power of language and the interpretation of meaning. “We all have a metaphor for the nation as ‘family.’ We have founding fathers. We send our sons and daughters to war. So I worked out the details of that metaphor and when I did, I realized that if we have two different understandings of the nation, we have two different understandings of the family.” It clicked. Suddenly I realized why blue collar America would vote for an administration that so obviously does not have its best interest at heart. One does not question an authoritarian father. You simply do as you’re told and trust that all will be well. The media, having been so successful in feeding the public this perverted American portrait, has become more than complicit, it is culpable.

Amy Goodman, a long time role model of mine, articulated beautifully her hopes for the future of the media. Her understanding of the public’s perspective and need for truth is illustrated by Democracy Now!’s massive syndication, now 300 stations strong. “We have to get more mainstream voices in the media. The media is not mainstream at all, but extreme. It does not represent most people.” This struck me as profound, the concept of an ‘extreme’ media. This theme was expressed by many of the attendees and was the topic of several discussions.

Bill Moyers is, in fact, so disgusted by the current media climate and its lack of journalistic integrity that he is threatening to retire his rocking chair and return to the airwaves, no doubt to the chagrin of the folks at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Even Bob McChesney, the conference facilitator, made time to speak with us. “To have an effective democracy, you can’t have too
much inequality. The United States has seen a stunning growth in inequality in the last 20 to 25 years and that’s cancerous to democracy where everyone is supposed to be a political equal if not an economic equal. And that is a media problem. We have to ask, does our media system discourage inequality or encourage it? I think, regrettably, the evidence is very strong that our media system, by undercovering labor issues, by never covering this issue [media reform], by constantly hyping the issues of advertisers and corporations, encourages inequality and therefore, just on that level, is a significantly anti-democratic force.”

Medea Benjamin, Danny Schechter, and Andy Messner are some of the many who spoke and contributed at the conference and took a moment to reflect on the media with us. The common denominator; “This is a time of coalition building and real progress. The movement has gained such momentum that change is inevitable.”

As the editing process begins and I delve deeply into many hours of digital footage, I count my blessings slowly and carefully. I am a cog in this wheel of change. I feel the old ways grinding beneath the weight of it and bear the burden of this work with a light heart.

Media Reform Conference: We are the Mainstream!
BY KRISTINE SNYDER—Student/Intern/Activist

By far, the most exhilarating concept I brought home from the 2005 Media Reform Conference is the idea that this current reform movement is celebrating a parallel media. This is not an “alternative media” as I had become accustomed to calling the news from independent sources. This reformed media is not an alternative to corporate media. It is parallel and equal to corporate media. This movement celebrates the media being brought back to the public. It is the rebirth of our own media.

Real political change almost always begins with grass roots movements. Over and over people at the local level rather than at the center of major political activity have taken stands toward
positive reform. The conference in St. Louis was a splendid celebration of yet another movement begun on a grassroots level. The question as to whether the movement will be a success was never a topic at hand. The high spirits of all attendees was a pleasure I did not expect. The seriousness of the terrible state of our current corporate media was not up for discussion, nor was it even a question to contemplate. The purpose of the reform convention was to discuss solution. This resounding attitude created a level of hope for all that attended; a level of hope we all brought back to our own local communities.

A huge solution buzzing at the conference was digital technology. The internet is an excellent example of this. Digital technology has been revolutionary and has radically altered the media landscape in terms of policy. The economic models that were in place have been demolished with this movement. Businesses are trying to make money and neither the FCC nor Congress knows what to do. Changes are happening too fast and their default is to protect existing players. Congress is pushing for only digital everywhere, which is of course driven by the current budget deficit. Huge conglomerates hold semi-permanent licenses on the public airways.

Today, only 40 percent of Americans have high speed internet. Pushing for community internet is the key. It is important to let localities have control of what is being set up! Congress is so busy protecting their existing players that they have forgotten to look at anyone else. Our up-and-coming parallel media is taking over ... and with grand excitement!

This movement becomes a social justice issue when we look at the customers being targeted in the current digital market. People making over $75,000 annually are 95 percent of the internet customers today. People making less than that make up only 5 percent of the current customer base. When there is no competition, there is no regulation, and equality, fairness, and representation issues always exist. Money and people are what move things. We are up against money but we have power with the people. Uniting with pride to make powerful change is not only stimulating but also motivating.
We have all suffered from inaccurate and untrue forms of history through all different forms of media. I arrived home realizing that community media need to support one another! People own the airwaves and we should be able to negotiate the value and use of those airwaves. Local communities should gain and retain control. I arrived home from St. Louis realizing what a special and momentous occasion had occurred. Let the celebration continue until we all meet again next year.

The Media Reform Movement Comes Alive in St. Louis
BY CHRISTOPHER ROBIN COX—Student/Activist/Project Censored Intern

2,500 people took over the Millennium Hotel in downtown St. Louis, Missouri May 13-15 to collectively demonstrate how serious they are about mobilizing to fix the problems of our media. The Conference was a universal call to action for media activists. Speaker after speaker made it patently clear that media is an issue that affects us all, regardless of political ideology. Nearly fifty different panels were attended by people from 50 states and 10 countries. Danny Schechter, author of *Weapons of Mass Deception*, called it “the Million Word March.”

Joni Wallent, Kristine Snyder, Britt Walters, Luke Judd, Sandy Brown, Peter Phillips and I represented Project Censored at the conference and were joined by organizations nationwide including: Free Speech Radio News and Television, Media Alliance, Adbusters, Center for Public Integrity, Indymedia, *The Nation, The Progressive, In These Times, Democracy Now!* and the Pacifica Radio network.

Social theorist Lewis Gottschalk describes a “revolutionary event” as, “the event which demonstrates clearly that the conservative forces are no longer able to resist the revolutionary tide.” If it were possible to label a single event as the moment when a social movement became revolutionary, the St. Louis Media Reform conference would be it.
Friday, May 13, was the first full day of action, and from the very first moment there was fresh electricity in the air. Exhibits were being set up in the Media Democracy Showcase—a vast room that contained tables filled with literature from every organization conceivable—while rooms all over the hotel were prepared for what would turn out to be a constant array of pertinent panel discussions, workshops, caucuses, and film showings.

Well-known media activists such as Amy Goodman, Jim Hightower, Al Franken, Norman Solomon, Phil Donohue, Naomi Klein and FCC commissioners Michael Copps and Jonathan Adelstein intermixed with the thousands of us focusing on solution-based approaches to media reform in the United States. Project Censored taped interviews with numerous participants including Medea Benjamin, Danny Schechter, George Lakoff, Amy Goodman, Robert W. McChesney, and Phil Donahue.

Bill Moyers described what he saw as the problem with corporate media today. “Judith Miller of the New York Times, among others, relied on the credibility of official but unnamed sources when she served essentially as the government stenographer for claims that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. These ‘rules of the game’ permit Washington officials to set the agenda for journalism, leaving the press all too often simply to recount what officials say instead of subjecting their words and deeds to critical scrutiny. Instead of acting as filters for readers and viewers, sifting the truth from the propaganda, reporters and anchors attentively transcribe both sides of the spin, invariably failing to provide context, background or any sense of which claims hold up and which are misleading,” Moyers said. “I decided long ago that this wasn’t healthy for democracy.”

Pete Tridish of the Prometheus Radio Project and Sascha Meinrath of the Champaign-Urbana Community Wireless Network (CUWiN) reported on the reality of wireless Internet communities. CUWiN is truly grassroots in their effort to bring Internet access to the world at large, one community at a time. The concept is simple: “A free wireless networking system that any municipality, company, or group of neighbors could easily set up themselves”
Sascha Meinrath spoke at length about this revolutionary grassroots technology. He lectured about a “mesh network” that is established with the use of nearby “nodes” on rooftops and the like. This makes it possible to establish Internet connectivity simply by installing the CUWiN network software. Perhaps the most grassroots element in this technology is the ability to disrupt, and indeed take over, the city center-based profit structure that Internet users are stuck with today.

Low-power radio is another technological frontier that was well represented at the conference. Pete Tridish was inspirational in his telling of the story of the beginnings of Prometheus Radio Project (PRP). Tridish spoke about “radio barn raising” events in which an entire radio station is built “from the microphone to the antennae.” For more on PRP visit www.prometheusradio.org.

“For those of us who have been participating in the media reform movement for a decade or more, St. Louis was a point where a light at the end of the tunnel seems possible. Nowhere have I seen such enthusiasm for reform and the real prospect of success as was evident at this conference,” said Peter Phillips, Director of Project Censored. “We are at a new point in the movement where the distrust of corporate news has opened the space for new sources of news for all Americans,” Phillips added.

In an ideal world, there would be a conference like this every few months, so that all of people who are intensely unsatisfied with the media—70 percent according to Danny Schechter—could learn what Project Censored participants learned: that the media reform movement is exploding, and that the battle against corporate hegemony is winnable. In the words of FCC commissioner Michael Copps: “Winnable? I’ve got a two-word answer to that. Damn right!”

Media Reform: A Social Movement for the People
BY BRITT WALTERS—Project Censored Intern/Public Speaking Team
This year’s National Conference for Media Reform could quite possibly be considered the greatest mobilization of media activists to date and was undoubtedly unlike anything I have ever experienced. Although my work with Project Censored had previously initiated my intense interest surrounding the current state of corporate media, and consequently a passion for exposing its downfalls, there was no way I could be prepared for all the conference had to offer.

The extremely valuable and seemingly endless whirlwind of information touched base on a multitude of issues including: Media Ownership and Consolidation, Globalizing the Media Reform Movement, Media Policy, The FCC Past and Present, Online Tools for Media Reform Activism, and so much more.

In addition to the numerous seminars guaranteed to spark the flame of curiosity, Project Censored interns were also able to partake in the experience hands-on via instigating and conducting interviews and exchanging ideas with other organizations and projects around the country. Such components of the trip were absolutely amazing; nevertheless, it was the overall aura and underlying message of the conference as a whole that I found to be both most important and truly unforgettable.

The second I reached the conference registration desk at the Millennium Hotel in St. Louis, my feelings of great anticipation were bombarded with the externally strong wave of energy that was pulsating throughout the room. Often times, working for Project Censored, even though it is a rather large organization, the fight for media reform and the struggle to educate individuals about the problems with our current media structure can seem rather hopeless. There are those individuals who prefer to adopt an “ignorance is bliss” mentality by choosing to overlook the conflicts of interest existing between policy makers and corporate media. Furthermore, there are those who recognize the tribulations of the situation, yet feel there is no way to counteract it—or are too fearful to attempt to do so. However, no matter the topic at hand, the main essence throughout the sold-out conference was that change is both a necessity and a possibility. This massively large group of diverse
attendees came together for the sole purpose of discussing the problems of the media and the ways in which everyone can work together to organize and create solutions. It was a blatant reminder that this is a battle certainly worth fighting and more importantly, a battle we are capable of winning.

In fact, this movement will without a doubt become one of the greatest and most important movements of our time. Creating parallel media and establishing a news media system for the people is essential to every individual regardless of race, gender, age, occupation or political association. It is not, therefore, surprising that so many individuals from a variety of locations, backgrounds and organizations have become involved in this movement. For no matter who you are, it is important that the news you receive about the world around you is not junk or entertainment disguised as news, but the vital information needed to promote a healthy democracy. Real news is necessary to all of us in order to make important decisions regarding the issues that directly affect our lives. Everyone, from environmentalist to educator, policymaker to party coordinator, artist to activist, media producer to media user, and all in between are directly affected by the media they consume, and are hence becoming actively involved in the movement at hand.

No one is alone in this struggle for change. In order to affect the full power of the people, we must all work together and pool our resources to perpetuate an increasing momentum. Overall, it is up to us as individuals to actively seek out the information we need—and it is up to us as a collective whole to work together to disseminate such information and rise up against the injustices of our current media system. In the end, it was the trip to St. Louis that really opened my eyes to the true power of working together. The conference exposed me to a multitude of new issues, new information and most importantly a new hope for the future of not only our media, but of our democratic way of life.

For reviews and program material on the Media Reform conference visit www.freepress.net.
CommonDreams.Org
BY BRITTNY ROELAND

Common Dreams is a national non-profit citizens’ organization working to bring progressive Americans together to promote progressive visions for America’s future. Founded in 1997, Common Dreams is committed to being on the cutting-edge of using the internet as a political organizing tool, and creating new models for internet activism. Common Dreams is funded exclusively by members and supporters, therefore there is no corporate control, no advertising, and no hidden agendas involved in their views. With a small staff and a network of volunteers, the organization is proud of what is accomplished on a shoestring budget.

Common Dreams posts an eclectic mix of politics, issues and breaking news with an emphasis on progressive perspectives that are increasingly hard to find in the corporate-dominated media.

The news center’s roots go back to the early ’90s when Common Dreams Editor Craig Brown was the chief-of-staff to former Congressman Tom Andrews. With access to an incredible supply of daily newspapers, magazines, journals and briefing papers, members of Congress are deluged with information, but have very little time to scan through it, much less read it. Brown created a daily “newsclips” operation for the congressman and the staff. Early every morning interns and staff would scan dozens of designated publications looking for new articles or open editorials from a list of issues that were of greatest interest to the congressman and staff. By 9 a.m., all staff had a photocopied and collated copy of the “Daily Clips” to carry with them all day and read in between the chaos.

The magic of the internet has made it possible to create a “Daily Clips” for everyone. The Common Dreams News Center is updated daily, and provides people with easy access to articles throughout the media.
Every day activists are making news and speaking out on the issues of our time. But far too often the filter of the corporate-media ignores these voices. Progressive NewsWire brings the press releases and the statements of America’s progressive community directly to you, no filters, no editing, and it is done in “real time.” Progressive NewsWire started in June of 1998, and has archived news releases ever since.

**BuzzFlash.com**

BY JACOB RICH

Mark Karlin, who started BuzzFlash.com in May 2000, calls BuzzFlash’s website “the internet democracy bulletin board of these times.” It is easy to see how this may be true when the site daily posts more than 190 headlines that lead to articles from a huge variety of sources. On the average day, BuzzFlash connects readers to articles from news sources such American mainstays as the New York Times, the Washington Post, smaller papers like Ashland, Wisconsin’s the Daily Press, international media like the UK Guardian, the Gulf Daily News, and to blogs like the Gadflyer or Thinkprogress.com.

Not only does BuzzFlash offer one click access to an enlightening amount of information; it also does it with a sense of humor. For example, the headline on Buzzflash leading to a New York Times article, originally titled “In DeLay’s Home District, Rumblings of Discontent Surface,” is changed to “Tom DeLay’s fan base erodes as home district Republicans call him an ‘embarrassment.’” BuzzFlash has said “Remember, the White House wants him out because he distracts from Bush’s Orwellian message points. There is only one Mafia King in the GOP.”

If you think the mainstream media can be too partial and sanitize the significance of some news, BuzzFlash may be the place that resuscitates the news to new life. BuzzFlash may at times take its satire too far, but satire can sometimes do the truth justice. An article headline that BuzzFlash altered went from “Bush’s attempt to

Mark Karlin started BuzzFlash.com in May 2000 with 34 readers, a number that is now up to about 150,000 a day, while during the Fall election of 2004 the website was getting 5,000,000 visitors a month. BuzzFlash also e-mails alerts of its stories every day to those who sign up for free subscriptions. Most media avoid reporting critically about their advertisers or the massive conglomerate that owns them. Just recently, General Motors pulled some of its advertising money from The Los Angeles Times after the Times published articles that were critical of General Motors. Buzzflash doesn’t take any money from advertisers, and it is independently run, so it doesn’t have to pull its punches.

BuzzFlash is supported by contributions from its readers and customers buying progressive merchandise such as books, videos, and cds. The right wing so-called ‘echo chamber’ plays up books that support their ideas, and sometimes this attention helps get these books on the New York Times best-seller list. BuzzFlash tries to do the same for leftist ideas by promoting and selling books, which also raises funds for BuzzFlash.

Of the more than 190 articles posted on Buzz Flash’s website daily, about 80 percent come from other sources. Another 20 percent is original work written for BuzzFlash by contributing columnists and staff. BuzzFlash receives e-mails from its readers sending tips on articles that lead to stories coming from a wide variety of sources—creating a “quiltwork of commentary.” Many articles are from local press that don’t receive the attention they deserve. BuzzFlash helps give them national notice. For example, recently a reader sent in a tip on an article in a small North Dakota newspaper that revealed that there was a do-not-admit list for George Bush’s social security meeting, even though it was a publicly funded event. This news gained national attention as a result of BuzzFlash exposure.

BuzzFlash puts special effort into exposing the hypocrisy of the right wing. They post a page called “the GOP Hypocrite of the
“Week” that calls attention to a new Republican every week. Currently the hypocrite of the week is actually a couple, Arthur Finkelstein and the man he just married in Massachusetts. Buzz Flash reports “The hypocrisy challenge for Mr. and Mr. Finkelstein is to explain how come Arthur makes his money supporting right wing demagogues who rally the GOP faithful by opposing just such rights for gays?” According to BuzzFlash, Arthur Finkelstein, “made his professional mark helping Jesse Helms rise to his perch of infamous and destructive power.” BuzzFlash also adds, “The least he can do is devote his brain to science. There is much to be learned about how so many GOP leaders can be in denial about their ‘values gap.’ ”

BuzzFlash operates out of Chicago, outside of the beltway where many reporters live and report and cozy up to the government. This may be part of the reason BuzzFlash can report on issues like the Iraq war, the budget crisis, and Tom DeLay threatening judges, while mainstream media gives more attention to the music George Bush is listening to on his I-pod.

According to Karlin the success of BuzzFlash is similar to Moveon.org; they both found people passionate about being informed on current affairs, and passionate about affecting the world with progressive change. BuzzFlash is working on expanding to more affiliate sites and is also planning to do some radio programming.

Center for Digital Democracy
BY SEAN ARLT

The communication revolution of 21st century has brought about unparalleled access to information while simultaneously connecting and stimulating the organization of many online communities. The Center for Digital Democracy (CDD), www.democraticmedia.org—a web based media group, was established to protect the openness and diversity of the internet. CDD is looking to amend the use of digital communications to enhance the democratic process through
the development and encouragement of noncommercial, public interest programming.

The CDD’s main instrument for pursuing these goals is the distribution of educational information to develop public understanding of the changing dimensions of the U.S. digital media system. The CDD offers a myriad of resources regarding digital television and cable TV’s monopolistic ownership patterns. These resources include educational guides, news articles and press releases relating to the state of democracy in digital media.

On April 9th, 2005 Jeffrey Chester, executive director of the CDD, reported on the right wing coup that has begun to transform the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CBP) into a conservative propaganda machine. Ken Ferree, the now active president of the CPB is a former key aide to Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC’s) Chairman, Michael Powell. During his time as an aide to Powell, Ken Ferree helped to compose the FCC’s 2003 rules on media ownership—designed to almost completely eliminate the regulations on the media conglomerates. Mr. Chester reported that Ken Ferree and his right wing supporters were attempting to dismantle “liberal” programming on PBS and NPR.

On April 27, 2005, CDD discovered that the CPB majority directors were attempting to hide a national public opinion survey. The survey appeared in an annual report to Congress, but was never released to the public. The survey showed that the overwhelming majority of the U.S. public is happy with PBS and NPR’s programming and that there was no public support for altering the stations. The Terrance Group’s survey was conducted between June and July 2003, and surveyed 1,008 adults. The survey found that 80 percent of the sampling gave public broadcasting a favorable rating and only 10 percent indicated an unfavorable opinion of NPR and PBS. Furthermore, over 50 percent of those surveyed believed that PBS news was more “trustworthy” than the new shows on networks, including ABC, CBS, FOX, and CNN. Obviously unsatisfied with the results of the survey Ken Ferree and the other directors of the CPB chose not to publish the information.
The Center for Digital Democracy is also covering the potential take over of cable provider Adelphia Communications, who currently has over 5 million subscribers. The first and second largest media conglomerates, Comcast and Time Warner, are attempting to buy out Adelphia in what would be one of the largest media mergers of the 21st century. Comcast and Time Warner already control over 70 percent of the cable subscriptions in the top 20 U.S. markets and have almost total control over the programming on their subsequent stations.

The Center for Digital Democracy is an excellent example of the democratic power that new media can bring. Information about the state of the media is freely available to people all over America. Chester warns, however, that we are at a critical time in media reform, and without a tremendous effort on the side of grassroots organizations and independent media groups, the freedom of the internet as we know it could be swallowed up by corporate America.

A-Infos.ca
BY BRITTNY ROELAND

In February 1990, German anarchists invited to a European conference on the requirements and perspectives of international co-operation, in the Netherland town of Venlo, ascertained that there had been little continuous cooperation between the anarchist movements of the various countries. Everyone involved in the conference agreed that one of the main causes for this striking lack of international co-operation between anarchists was the isolation of the individual movements.

This was further amplified by the fact that most anarchists had to mainly rely on media under private or state control as a source of international information. This often resulted in an enormous informational deficit and a distorted view of the cultural, economical, political and social conditions in other countries. It was agreed that continuous problems and threats such as the internationalization of capital power was more important than ever.
Therefore, the groups agreed on a loose but reliable international co-operation to help establish and support anarchist contacts, as well as improved flow of information among the different anarchist movements. Thus the A-Infos Network was created.

While this network was originally a co-operation of European groups, positive international responses quickly helped expand it to a network of anarchist individuals and groups world-wide, whose members meet every year to discuss the development of their work and make decisions that concern the whole network. Meanwhile groups and individuals from Canada, England, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Russia, Sweden, Spain and Uruguay participate in the A-Infos network.

An international collective of revolutionary anti-authoritarian, anti-capitalist activists, involved in class/social struggle, coordinates the A-Infos Project. This is a group who consider themselves as revolutionary, class-struggling social anarchists, or anarcho-communists, or libertarian communists, or syndicalists, or hold similar opinions but use other labels. A-Infos is organized by people who hold the social theory that revolution is necessary to bring about the new classless social order, and that this revolution can only come about through the participation of the vast majority of working people.

In the struggle for a free society, A-Infos distributes news and articles in several languages, covering a wide range of areas, including workplace and environmental struggles as well as the fight against racism, sexism and homophobia. A-Infos also distributes news on indigenous people’s anti-colonialist fight against settlers, occupation and marginalization, as well as anti-nationalist and anti-regional separatist activities. A-Infos is a specialized press agency, in the service of the movement of revolutionary anti-capitalist activists.

A-Infos is not an open “liberal” service that distributes anything they are sympathetic to. It is not Indymedia. It is first of all a free distribution tool for information from and about collectives of anarchists (and other anti-authoritarian revolutionaries) involved in the struggle.
A-Infos is run by the A-Infos Collective which makes all decisions through its direct-democratic decision-making process and discussion on the collective’s e-mail list: a-infos-org. It is, however, not necessary to join the A-Infos Collective in order to contribute to its work. You can help, for example, by translating posts from one language to another. Another way to contribute is to send news articles for distribution.

For more information please visit www.A-Infos.ca.

The Australian Greens: www.greens.org.au
BY MARK THOMPSON

In 1984, Petra Kelly, a key parliamentarian member of the West German Greens, made her second visit to Australia. She spoke out to various green party affiliates and encouraged them to band together and develop a national identity. Soon after her visit, 50 Greens activists, who had already wanted to gain recognition, came together in Tasmania and put together a national conference. In 1992, Green representatives from across the nation gathered in North Sydney and agreed to form the Australian Greens. The Australian Greens became part of the Global Greens network, with around 70 Green parties established worldwide. Greens have been elected to public office in 23 nations, and in European countries such as Germany, Latvia, and France, Green parties are part of governing coalitions.

Today the Australian Greens concentrate their energy for the purpose of providing information to the public about environmental and political concerns. It is their goal “to increase opportunities for public participation in political, social, and economic decision making, and to break down inequalities of wealth and power that inhibit participatory democracy.” They try to achieve their political goals by publishing a magazine three times a year, filming campaigns which are showcased online, producing a variety of television and radio announcements, and managing a website with a plethora of weekly news stories.
Greens are found across Australia and throughout the world with Global Greens speaking in public to promote peace and encourage broad public involvement in their movement.

The Green website is loaded with daily articles and information that involves the many ecosystems and societies of Australia, as well as environmental issues that span the whole earth. The Greens aim to encourage the development of a consciousness that respects the value of all life.

The Greens are working to turn Australia into a model country that encourages social justice, ecologically sustainable economies, meaningful work programs, and universal cultural appreciation.

Clockwise from top left: intern Joni Wallant with journalist Joel Bleifuss of *In These Times*; intern Christopher Robin Cox interviewing Mediacompany.org founder Danny Schechter; Air America Radio host Al Franken addressing the convention; intern Sandy Brown
interviewing author George Lakoff; Project Censored director Peter Phillips with Democracy Now! host Amy Goodman; Sandy Brown interviewing media reform leader Robert W. McChesney.